

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A biologically pure culture of a microorganism belonging to the genus *Rhodococcus* and having the ability to degrade urethane bonds, or a mutant strain thereof.

2. (Currently Amended) The biologically pure culture of a microorganism according to claim 1, wherein the microorganism belonging to the genus *Rhodococcus* is *Rhodococcus equi*.

3. (Currently Amended) The biologically pure culture of a microorganism according to claim 2, wherein the microorganism belonging to *Rhodococcus equi* is *Rhodococcus equi* strain TB-60-DMZ 16175.

4. (Withdrawn) A method for degrading a urethane compound, which comprises the step of bringing the urethane compound into contact with the microorganism according to any one of claims 1 to 3.

5. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 4, wherein the urethane compound is a compound used as a source material for polyurethane production.

6. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 4, wherein the urethane compound is a polyurethane.

7. (Withdrawn) A method for degrading a polyurethane, which comprises the steps of:  
bringing the polyurethane into contact with the microorganism according to any one of claims 1 to 3; and  
bringing the polyurethane into contact with a microorganism having the ability to degrade ester bonds in the polyurethane.

8. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 7, wherein the microorganism having the ability to degrade ester bonds in the polyurethane is *Paenibacillus amylolyticus* strain TB-13 or *Comamonas acidovorans* strain TB-35.

9. (New) The biologically pure culture according to claim 1, wherein said urethane bonds are polyurethane bonds.

10. (New) A biologically pure culture of *Rhodococcus equi* strain TB-60-DMZ 16175 which has the ability to degrade polyurethane bonds, or a mutant strain thereof.